



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS®

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER
General President

VINCENT J. BOLLON
General Secretary-Treasurer

May 6, 2005

The Honorable Chris Chocola
U.S. House of Representatives
510 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Chocola:

On behalf of the 270,000 Members of the International Association of Fire Fighters, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to you for introducing HR 2177, *The HELPS* (Health Enhancement for Local Public Safety) *Retirees Act*. The legislation takes a very large step forward in ensuring that retired IAFF members can afford to pay for health insurance.

As you know, due to the nature of our jobs, fire fighters retire earlier than other occupations and face significant healthcare needs as a result of a career spent responding to emergencies in hazardous and stressful environments.

Although some jurisdictions offer retirees the option to remain in their employer-based health plan, retirees are generally required to pay all or most of the premium. It is not uncommon for a retired fire fighter to spend 80% of their pension checks on health insurance. Your legislation will allow retirees to use money from their pensions without penalty to cover those costs.

It has been our pleasure to work with you in drafting *The HELPS Retirees Act* and solidifying its strong bipartisan support. We appreciate your recognition that our nation's public safety officers regularly risk their health and their lives to protect the property and lives of Americans and your efforts to protect them against increasing healthcare costs in their retirement years.

Again, the IAFF thanks you for your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with you and your staff in seeing that *The HELPS Retirees Act* becomes law in the 109th Congress.

Sincerely,

Harold A. Schaitberger
General President

